

For Immediate Release

www.wa.gov/esd

Date: Nov. 18, 2003

Contact: Kirsta Glenn (360) 438-4812

Gary Kamimura (360) 902-9314

Michael Wilson (360) 902-9317

Washington's Unemployment Rate Falls to 7.0 Percent in October

OLYMPIA –Washington's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell by six-tenths of a percentage point to 7.0 percent in October, Employment Security Commissioner Sylvia P. Mundy announced today. The nation's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate declined by one-tenth of a percentage point to 6.0 percent. Washington's non-adjusted unemployment rate fell by five-tenths of a percentage point to 6.6 percent.

"The new state unemployment data reflects the good news at the national level," said Mundy. "Although we are still a long way from a full-scale labor market recovery, there has been a significant improvement over the month. The labor force increased to its highest level, on a seasonally adjusted basis, since January 2003. Both measures of employment, from the household and the establishment surveys, show job gains over the month."

Non-agricultural employment increased by 14,000 jobs over the month. Most of this increase was accounted for by seasonal gains in education, up 14,700 jobs at the state level and 14,600 jobs at the local level. Many other industries had seasonal layoffs, including construction (-1,700); manufacturing (-2,900); and leisure and hospitality (-10,600). Financial services posted a small drop in employment, down 500 jobs over the month, signaling some moderation in the refinancing and home buying boom.

Trade and information were little changed over the month, while the transportation and warehousing industry was up slightly, 700 jobs. Temporary help firms were also up over the month, adding 900 jobs, giving an early signal that firms may not be able to meet current demand without increasing their workforce.

Over the year, non-agricultural employment is up 8,000 jobs. This is the first over-the-year increase after three months of declines and is the largest over the year increase since January 2003. The over-the-year loss of manufacturing jobs has moderated to 14,900 jobs. Aerospace manufacturing, in particular, is down over the year by 9,500 compared to 11,600 in January. In January 2003, though, aerospace accounted for 58 percent of over the year job loss in manufacturing, while in October aerospace accounted for 64 percent of manufacturing job loss.

Retail trade is up over the year, as is construction, financial activities, professional and business services, health and educational services, leisure and hospitality, and government. The information sector is still down due to job losses in telecommunications. The transportation and warehousing industry is down due mainly to air transportation.